Swank's Phantom Menace Review Rebuttal – Part 1

By Bryan Young on February 17, 2010 in News Star Wars

Now, I understand that a lot of people have watched the ">now infamous 70 minute Phantom Menace review and I had a hard time getting through part 1 the first time I clicked on it. I reacted with a little volatility to it, mainly because I thought it was a waste of time for someone to put together a 70 minute review of a film.

And, I'll concede that some of his points are valid, but others are pretty paper thin. So, I wanted to discuss some of his points and dismantle a few of them that I thought were pretty ridiculous.

I won't bother with arguing about the tone of the piece, which I thought was pretty obnoxious, I'll just take on his major points in this seven part series.

Part One: The Protagonist:

The author of the video posits that Phantom Menace doesn't have a main character or a protagonist, but the film clearly follows Qui-Gon Jinn, through his mission, his finding of Anakin, and his dilemma about whether or not he should train the boy in the face of opposition to the Jedi council. Supporting characters help fill the plot and dilemma's in the same way Han Solo, Princess Leia, Chewbacca, and Lando fill them in in the classic trilogy.

The opening crawl text serves as the context for Qui-Gon's mission and he goes through the film trying to serve his duty and fulfill it, but at the same time he struggles with his interpretation of the force and the will of his masters.

Queen Amidala is at the center of this as well, and her duty is to her people.

Phantom Menace's structure rhymes quite a bit with the structure of A New Hope and Anakin arrives at about the same point in the timeline and story as Han Solo does in their respective first appearances. Though Anakin is younger and admittedly less likeable than Han Solo, he provides a pivotal lynch-pin to the story (both in aiding in their egress from Tatooine and in creating that moral dilemma for Qui-Gon) and saves the day.

I agree that there is no single protagonist in The Phantom Menace that has the strength of Luke Skywalker in A New Hope, but follows the same fractured protaganist pattern that The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi do. Each of the protagonists add their dilemmas together to create a whole picture of the story. It's the same thing with a lot of war movies. Take Richard Attenborough's A Bridge Too Far as an example. There isn't any one consistent protagonist, but a dozen of them reaching for the same final goal though all of their motivations are different. Though the Nazis are barely characters in that film, they are much like the Sith in Phantom Menace. We don't need the extra exposition to be told that the Nazis winning are a bad thing and the same is true for the Sith in The Phantom Menace.

Phantom Menace accomplishes this "super-goal for all the protagonists" structure. Never once do you watch that film without a sense of what the story is or what needs to be accomplished for our band of heroes to win the day. There are clear objectives brought on by the characters and their decisions that are affected by their actions. Naboo is in peril and through the film we've learned that the two indigenous people of Naboo are at odds with each other. If they don't come together and fight the Trade Federation, the Sith will win. And while we aren't exactly sure WHY the Sith want to win, the fact that they do makes this repulsive to the audience. Because of the goals of the protagonists and the strength of the villain, we are glued to our seats when Darth Maul arrives to prevent this from happening and we cheer when Obi-Wan finally gives the bad guy his due.

The author of the review even admits that you don't have to follow the structure he outlined in the beginning of his video essay, but doesn't offer any credible reason why it doesn't work here other than some snarky remarks.

And the point that traditionally the protagonist has to win the day and get the girl is specious. As a protagonist, Qui-Gon sacrificed his life for his duty and that sense of loss permeates in the end of the film at his funeral, which is a catalyst for the rest of the Star Wars saga. To separate Phantom Menace from the fabric of the entire story is neither plausible nor fair.

In a vain attempt to prove his point about a lack of clear characters and protagonists, the author of the 70 minute Phantom Menace review asks a few of his friends to describe Star Wars characters

without saying what they look like, what kind of costume they wore, or what their profession in the movie was.

My guess is he asked a bunch of people who hadn't even really watched Phantom Menace more than once because he had to remind them who he even was. Had he asked someone like me, he would have had as full and complete a description for Qui-Gon as he got for Han Solo in the video.

For example: Qui-Gon is a venerable, older gentleman who has a habit of taking his own path and bucking both tradition and authority. He's wise, offering constant advice and commentary on things and keeps his cards close to his chest, often to the point of befuddling and frustrating those who work beneath him. As an archetype, he's the reserved and wisened old sword-master.

As for Queen Amidala: She has an overriding sense of duty and civic pride to her people and, though she's thought to be young and naïve, she has a strength and courage to her that help win the day. She's also not interested in the pomp and circumstance of royal life and instead prefers to witness and participate in events first hand. She's eloquent and concerned, willing to fight for her people in a way that echoes the character of her daughter in the later films.

Asking people who don't really know about the movies or don't know enough about them to describe the basic character traits of characters isn't much of a genuine argument. All he needed to do was ask someone who HAD seen the movie and he wouldn't have been able to include that in his video review.

That is where Part One of the review ended and so too will I end my rebuttal of it. We'll see what happens next time.

Rebuttal to the 70 Minute Phantom Menace Review – Part 2

By Bryan Young on April 5, 2010 in Movies News Star Wars

A couple of months ago, I started a series of rebuttals to the infamous "70 minute Phantom Menace review" that's been making the rounds on the internet, but life and work have pretty well gotten in the way of me continuing. But since Red Letter Media (those responsible for the Phantom Menace review) have released their " target="_blank">90 minute Attack of the Clones review, I've been inundated with requests for me to get off my duff and continue. So here I am. This is a direct rebuttal of Part 2 of their 70 minute Phantom Menace review. You can watch their version of it here.

Part 2: The Story Our friends at Red Letter Media don't have much to complain about the story other than they think the opening is weak. And there isn't much I can say about the "indictment" of the opening, since it was pretty thin. The opening, I think, is one of the strongest assets of The Phantom Menace. Take a moment to just set the scene here: When things open in Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope, things are bad in the galaxy. Very bad. And now we have a prequel set 30 or 40 years previous. If the galaxy had spent that much time in the same turmoil, the series would be monotonous and boring. This opening is the galaxy as it was. There were no rebels and there was no Empire. Everything was idyllic. And it's a contrast that the biggest problem is something so minor as the taxation to trade routes in outlying star systems. We have our heroes, the Jedi, enter into this conflict, dabbling into politics in a somewhat unprecedented move and those responsible (Darth Sidious) find out about it and orders them to be killed. 5 minutes into the film, Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan's ship is blown up, Naboo is under-full scale invasion, and the wheels are in motion for the fall of the Republic in a way the galaxy hasn't seen since the inception of their central government. Seeing how innocent and naïve the galaxy is here, in comparison to how it is in the classic trilogy offers us a contrast that makes the bright seem brighter and the dark seem darker. And then we're off on a meaningful spate of action that brings the Jedi onto their journey to try to stave off the first major conflict the galaxy has seen in a millennium. As for the title and the villain: The Phantom Menace implies that the villain is in the shadows, pulling the strings. This is setting the stage. This is how Palpatine/Sidious operates, in subtle ways to get what he wants. This is the beginning of the road that leads us to the ultimate destruction of the Jedi, but if he came out, waving his arms to reveal that now, it would be ridiculous. As far as the lengthy discussion about the taxation of trade routes, he spends way too much brain power on a macguffin. Alfred Hitchcock coined this term: it's a plot device that makes the action happen without being important in and of itself. To spend too much time caring about why they're taxing the trade routes and why the Trade Federation is blockading Naboo is literally a waste of time. Why would the Naboo care WHY the Trade Federation is blockading their planet? It's enough that they are that forces them into action. It's enough that the blockade exists and a dispute needs to be settled by independent arbiters (the Jedi) and that the Supreme Chancellor needs to act. And really, it's no stretch to believe that a protocol droid, programmed for etiquette and protocol in situations like this, can recognize what the hell a Jedi Knight is. And then for the Trade Federation who have no prior experience with Jedi to think that gassing them will work to kill them makes perfect sense. There wasn't a lot of substance to Part Two of the Phantom Menace review that Red Letter Media put out, because to distract from

that, they added in a chick tied up in a basement and the reviewer getting off his meds and needing pizza rolls. In any case, I'll try to knock these out more regularly. I've literally received a dozen emails asking for these since the Attack of the Clones review went live. I'll get there as soon as I can.

Swank's Rebuttal to the 70 Minute Phantom Menace Review – Part 3

By Bryan Young on April 7, 2010 in News Star Wars

I've gotten quite a reaction from the very vocal anti-prequel minority about this review. Their wishes of death upon me have encouraged me further that this rebuttal is a great idea and I'm actually having quite a bit of fun writing it.

Seriously, there have been wishes for me to suffer a horrible, slow, painful death for loving these movies, which in the grand scheme of things seems like a ridiculously petty and obnoxiously immature thing to wish someone dead over, but these anti-prequel nuts are the Tea Baggers of Star Wars fans.

So to continue with the context: Red Letter Media produced a 70 minute "review" of The Phantom Menace. Tucked in behind the humour that I'm sure some people find funny, are some actual legitimate arguments about the story and characters, etc. of The Phantom Menace. This series of rebuttals explains why none of their complaints matter or make sense.

Part 3

To be honest, Part 3 was so dizzying I was actually confused for a minute and had to watch the first 4 minutes a few times. The story in Phantom Menace makes logical sense, but the reviewer turns things on their ear in a manner that completely confuses you for no reason other than to try to support the fallacy of his point.

Let's try to start at the beginning here. The title of the film, The Phantom Menace, implies that there is someone behind the scenes pulling the strings who sees a bigger picture than we can. And he's manipulating the audience every bit as much as he's manipulating all the players. It seems that what the reviewer fails to realize is that Palpatine is not on the Trade Federation's team, and is giving them every bit as much misinformation as Sidious as he is giving everyone as Palpatine.

He's using them as a tool, which is why his actions might seem irrational to the plot, if one failed to realize that he was playing everyone. But Palpatine does his magic by setting wheels into motion and changes strategy when his current strategy isn't working. The reviewer plays it as though Palpatine is acting inconsistently, but his plan went awry when the Jedi and Amidala actually MADE it to Coruscant. He spent the entire time trying to prevent that from happening, and when it did, he switched his game up and made it work out even better for himself. My guess as to why he wanted to sign the treaty? If this young, naive queen signs this treaty that makes the invasion "legal", he can go to the Senate and say, "Our Queen was bullied into this and these Trade Federation guys even killed the Jedi our weak Chancellor sent." At that point, he could have someone else make the motion and because he's full of p iss and vinegar in the senate, he gets that strong sympathy vote. That seems logical to me.

Then the Red Letter Media guys take issue with the Trade Federation's ham fisted attempts to kill the Jedi. Aside from the fact that these guys are merchants and have no experience fighting Jedi

(and have an entire army to protect their interests, much like armoured guards you'd see at a bank or a weed dispensary), they go with a couple of different plans with little success. First we have the Dioxis gas. It's a thick, poisonous gas that's easy to see. The reviewers of Phantom Menace seem to think that an odorless, completely transparent gas would aid in the story, and I probably agree, but how boring would that look and sound on film? I can just see that having happened, and then the reviewer attacking it for having Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon spend 8 seconds of dialogue explaining that there's an invisible poison gas in the room.

And then the reviewer begins to histrionically demand that Nute Gunray put the poison in the tea, but forgets to mention that the tea is served before the order to kill them. And they didn't sense danger, they sensed fear. As soon as there was any ill-will toward them, they were tipped off to danger and I doubt they would have stopped to have a drink at that point.

Mr. Plinkett (which is what the reviewer seems to be called) then goes on to talk about the problem of them holding their breath, "as though they know the droids are just going to open the door." Umm… They're Jedi. They do know stuff like that.

Then, we're left to question the motives of the Trade Federation and why they would get in league with Darth Sidious. The answer is easy, he offered them complete subjugation of planets like Naboo. It doesn't matter that they were going to be betrayed by him at one point or another.

Next on the list is the question, "Why didn't the Jedi just fight all the droids in the hangar bay, steal a ship, and get back to Coruscant?" And I think the answer is pretty clear. Firstly, they're clearly outnumbered. No pair of Jedi could take out a thousand battle droids at once, it just couldn't happen. Secondly, this is just one batch from one hangar of one of thirty or more battleships. Even if they were able to annihilate the droids in the hangar bay they found themselves in, it wouldn't do anyone any good, because they'd still be left with the same problem. Their course of action made the most sense.

As far as the argument that Qui-Gon is a moron because he wanted them to stow away aboard separate ships, there are just as many reasons for it as good reasons Mr. Plinkett provides against it. For one: since they have no way of knowing where each individual landing craft is going, it gives them the best possible chance of at least one of them getting to the Naboo quickly. For two: It doubles their chances of success if one of them is discovered, the other can still make it. For three: it would allow them to sabotage a greater number of droids and artillery if they so chose.

Then Mr. Plinkett is offended that they follow Jar Jar to Otoh Gunga. It makes perfect sense. They have no idea where a city is of any sort, Jar Jar will lead them to the Gungan capital. Since the Naboo and the Gungans are inter-dependent of each other (whether they like to admit it or not), they would reasonably be expected to know how the Jedi could find the Naboo and warn them of the pending invasion if they make it in time. Obviously they didn't, but they could at least rescue the Queen and get her into a position to save her people.

It's all really reasonable to swallow. If you can suspend your disbelief enough to believe in the force and lightsabers, then you can suspend it long enough to get through the plot of Phantom Menace. If you can't, then I truly pity you.

To make sure you can keep up with these rebuttals, be sure to subscribe to my feed here and you'll get them as soon as they publish.

Swank's Rebuttal to the 70 Minute Phantom Menace Review – Part 4

By Bryan Young on April 8, 2010 in News Star Wars

I'm a little baffled by the level of wishes for my bodily harm since I've been writing these rebuttals. It crossed a line yesterday when one commenter wished someone would come to my house and punch me in the face, and then punch my eight year old son in the face for being named Anakin.

It's amazing, really. I would, however, like to apologize for calling prequel bashers the "tea baggers" of the Star Wars fan community. It was insulting, and I will from here on out refrain from name calling. Thank you "lazypadawan" for calling me out on that.

Having said that, I'd like to say one more thing before we get into the rebuttal for Part 4. People keep telling me that these movies are terrible and devoid of entertainment, but that is really a matter of opinion. I'm not saying you guys have to like them, and to be honest, I'm writing these articles for the people like me who do enjoy them and feel really beat up on by a very loud, vocal, and uncouth minority of people who dislike the prequels with a vengeance unseen in modern cinema. What I am saying though, is that you have to admit that there are people out there who derive entertainment and enjoyment from them and that they're not idiots. Sometimes I think people who like the Matrix are idiots, but I'm wrong. There's just something about those movies I don't understand and get. I think they're terrible and stupid (well, I only ever bothered watching the first one, but since it was so bad I didn't continue on to the rest), but I wouldn't ever try to ruin someone else's enjoyment of them. I guess what I'm saying is that if you guys who hate the prequels want to be taken seriously and actually debate the merits of my arguments versus Mr. Plinkett's, you really need to tone down your rhetoric and ratchet down the hate. And as we all know, hate is the path to the dark side.

And so, we move on to:

Part 4

Part Four of Red Letter Media's attack on The Phantom Menace opens with a rehash of problems presented earlier about the invasion of Naboo. And like I said in Part 2, the invasion makes complete sense using the internal logic of the story. I've been told that that's the wrong thing to do, but how can you judge a film by discarding it's consistent internal logic? That would be like judging it for what it's not, when instead we should look to its merits. But the invasion makes sense to the Trade Federation, whose strings are being pulled by Sidious. Like I said before, my theory of why they need the treaty signed is so that Palpatine can go to the senate, plead his sob story, and install himself as Chancellor. The plan worked out differently and he was able to have Amidala do it for him, but his intention was to have her sign a treaty by force and then have her killed, since there's nothing more mobilizing to a body politic than dead children.

And for those who say, “You’re just making this crap up,” you need to understand that when you watch movies, all of the information doesn’t have to be spoon fed to you for there to be a subtext, or story that needs to be read between the lines. Sometimes it backfires (like Michael Mann’s Miami Vice) and sometimes it works really well, like it does here. It also works really well in hundreds of other movies by guys like Stanley Kubrick, Martin Scorsese, Akira Kurosawa, PT Anderson, and on and on and on. American Graffiti is another good example of a film where the story was tenuous on the surface, but as you watch the film and examined the subtext, it really pops.

Then the reviewer has a problem with the fact that Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon don’t actually know that the Trade Federation is going to attack the Naboo and subsequently take down the Gungans. From a story-telling standpoint, it would have been awful boring watching them race around on the ship to find more conclusive evidence of the pending invasion (other than the invasion army). It would be like a bad episode of Scooby Doo or something. For the sake of expediency in the story telling, we can assume that they know and move on. As far as the internal logic of the story goes, it’s reasonable for the Jedi to assume that the invasion is happening because when they left the army it was on a forced march toward cities to invade. And who knows what they discovered or overheard on the landing ships? The point is, this argument is a trap. As boring as the reviewer claims this moment in the film is, it would have been twice as boring for the Jedi to run around and collect that conclusive evidence before moving on with the story.

The next point of contention is the fact that Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon have to travel to the other side of the world to reach the capital city of Naboo. “Why didn’t the droids land outside the one city or in the city to capture it?” The simple answer is that they did. It’s ridiculous to assume that of this entire planet there are only two cities. And since there are hundreds of invasion craft, it’s completely reasonable to assume that the ships Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon stowed away on were on their way to conquer other cities on the planet. They asked Jar Jar to lead them to the nearest city, which was Otoh Gunga. They asked the leaders there the quickest way to the leadership of the Naboo, which was on the other side of the planet. Again, following the internal logic of the film (which is all we should be basing our critiques on), this is a perfectly reasonable and exciting chain of events.

On the next point, I’m actually going to concede a little bit. The Trade Federation probably shouldn’t have sent 8 battle droids to guard Amidala on her way to the processing camp. They knew the Jedi were missing. They should have sent them with 8 destroyer droids, which had routed the Jedi before. But having said that, I still think processing Amidala into a camp sounds way more menacing than the reviewer. It invokes visions of the holocaust and Auschwitz to me. I’m sorry he didn’t bring enough imagination to the table to think about that. Especially since later in the film we see that message from Sio Bibble, warning them that there is a lot of suffering going on. (I would have liked to see some of that suffering, but this IS a kids movie and I think it would have been over the top.)

In the next part of the video, the reviewer seems to argue semantics about Captain Panaka’s choice of words for running the blockade, which I have to admit, made me laugh for the first time watching these. But to say this scene is garbage because of the techno-babble mechanics of the blockade and the ship is to say the exact same thing about Luke losing Artoo in A New Hope during the trench run. I mean, Artoo wasn’t exactly doing a whole lot to help Luke out there, except offer moral support and boosting his thrusters. In fact, this scene of Artoo saving the day against this blockade in Phantom Menace actually strengthens that weakness during the Battle of Yavin. But then the reviewer takes issue with the fact that the Queen, a 14 year old monarch who hasn’t seen the galaxy

would deign this droid with her thanks. I mean, she spends the rest of the movie making decisions with the wide-eyed naivety of a child (going into Mos Espa with Qui-Gon, her plan to take her planet back, etc.) but this time it's just too much to understand? This just seems awful nitpicky, more than any of the other more substantive points he's brought up in his videos. And is it so unbelievable that as part of her cover, to keep it secret from the Jedi (and moreso the audience) that Padme is really the Queen that she would be sent to clean the droid? Not at all. Again, this seems way too nitpicky for him to waste his time with.

By this time, it really feels like he's running out of steam on part 4.

The video wraps up with Mr. Plinkett calling Qui-Gon a drunk for heading to Mos Espa with Artoo, Jar Jar, and Padme. Since Qui-Gon and Padme are the main characters in this portion of the saga, it would have made little sense for them to stay on the ship. And like Qui-Gon says later in the film, "Nothing happens by accident." Because Qui-Gon brought Jar Jar and Padme, they were able to get to know each other and more about each others cultures in order to bring them together in the end. And without bringing Padme, Anakin probably wouldn't have stuck around to talk to her. And without Jar Jar, Anakin couldn't have broken up that fight with Sebulba, and he would never have invited them to take refuge at his house and there would be no Star Wars saga. It's like Back to the Future: if Obi-Wan went to get the part, Anakin and Padme never would have met, and that means Luke and Leia wouldn't have existed.

And since I pay attention to the story and the internal logic of it, I am rewarded with it making sense. The force (who because of the midi-chlorians dismissed it as no longer mystical) were guiding Qui-Gon to the vergance in the force that was Anakin Skywalker. I'm alarmed at how much of what is actually in the film has been discarded from the memories of the prequel bashers, because all of the problems they seem to have with the film are fixed by simply watching it with a suspension of disbelief and a keen attention to detail.

Make sure you come back for Part 5 of the Phantom Menace review soon. Love it or hate it, it's coming.

Swank's Rebuttal to the 70 Minute Phantom Menace Review – Part 5

By Bryan Young on May 12, 2010 in News Star Wars

Before I get into the meat and potatoes of Part 5 of my rebuttal, let me remind everyone that May 19th is Prequel Appreciation Day and I've got something special planned. And we're also going to be having a contest to give away a 2gb Star Wars mimo-bot in the next few days, with a winner announced on Prequel Appreciation Day, so be sure to check back frequently this week.

Since it's been a while, I'll offer a quick recap. Red Letter Media published a mildly humorous, 70 minute"take-down" of Phantom Menace on Youtube. The arguments made in the video were pretty thin, but a legion of screaming fan boys decided to make it their clarion call to institutionalize the hatred of a pretty great film.

I've been asked repeatedly to come up with logical responses to it and have been doing so on a semi-regular basis.

Part Five:

Mr. Plinkett starts his review by positing that Qui-Gon Jinn should have been non-existent (or forced into the background) and Obi-Wan Kenobi should have been the lead. And while I think that story would have worked to some degree as well, I really feel like the point of Qui-Gon being in the lead was two-fold: The first is we've never seen a traditional Master-Padawan relationship and have no idea how it works and seeing Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan interact is very telling of Obi-Wan's training of Anakin. The second part to that is that there is something wrong with this lineage of Jedi. As was revealed in Attack of the Clones, Qui-Gon's master was Count Dooku who turned into Sith Lord Darth Tyrannus. There's a logical sense to it. Yoda trained Dooku and lost him to the Dark Side, Dooku trained Qui-Gon and Qui-Gon insisted that Anakin be trained before his death. Was the taint of the dark side what caused this? It's an interesting question, to be sure.

But at the end of the day, the reviewer is judging the movie not on what it is, but what he wished it would have been. But it's not that. I've said this plenty of times before and it's worth saying again: there are a lot of Star Wars fans who don't like the prequels because they spent 16 years building up what they should be in their heads that they were too blinded by that to enjoy what they were. I don't think Mr. Plinkett is any exception.

The next portion of part five is an indictment of Qui-Gon's character.

The first argument is that Qui-Gon is devoid of morals because he's willing to use the force to influence outcomes in the film that seem questionable. But I think that's part of Qui-Gon's charm. He's constantly defying the council, the Jedi code and tradition. Could it be that he was trained unsuspectingly by a Sith Lord? Oh…yeah… he was…

Next is that he's "stupid" for not just killing Watto and taking the parts he needed, or trying to exchange the Repuiblic currency at other junk dealers. And sure, this might be a halfway legitimate point, but the reason he didn't do that is the same reason you don't see people circling the block for

hours looking for a parking spot in New York in the movies. In real life, or logically, they'd never find that parking spot right of the bat, but for the expediency of the story and for the sake of the audience, we just suspend our disbelief and move on.

Then, while I would have liked to have seen Qui-Gon just hire a smuggler like Han Solo to get them off Tatooine, that would require a lot of trust of some random outlaw in a bar. Qui-Gon has very little experience with Tatooine and doesn't want to risk attracting extra attention that explaining his situation to a rogue or outlaw in a bar would create. And getting on board an unknown freighter with the Queen and a whole bunch of "security guards" not trained in combat could end extraordinarily badly. They could have sold them out to the Hutts, to the Trade Federation, to Sidious, anybody. When Obi-Wan did it, he was familiar with the cantina he went to AND was able to go off the word of Chewbacca, a friend to the Jedi during the Clone Wars.

So, trying to finagle the part they needed seemed like the best course of action, and he used the force to help get him there because his situation was dire.

I'm not even going to get into Mr. Plinkett not being able to understand the bet between Qui-Gon and Watto. I was going to write about it ad nauseum, but I asked my 7 year old to explain it to me. When he understood it perfectly, I realized that Mr. Plinkett was either just moaning about it because he simply didn't like it, or because he has the mental faculties of a toddler.

And so we move on to: Anakin.

His first point is that people hate kids and they are the kiss of death in a movie. And instead of proving him wrong by listing a dozen incredibly well recieved movies with children in them, I'll just take that one as a punchline.

But then he has problems with Anakin building his mother a protocol droid. "Protocol droids are diplomats" he says, but we know that Threepio specifically can be useful in way more ways than that. His first job (after his mind wipe) was programming binary load lifters and he could also be used quite easily as a butler droid. And kids do lots of things because they want to, and then give ridiculous reasons for doing it. It would be no surprise if Anakin simply became fascinated by how the droid worked, wanted to build one, then his mom was like, "Anakin, you can't have this thing here." And then he was all like, "But mom, it's for you!"

Then he complains that if you're a little boy with a knack for building things, why would you waste your time building the same droid that everyone has… My first assumption is that he would have after he learned how droids work better after building Threepio, and my second assumption is that he works for a junk dealer, those were the parts most readily available for him to learn with.

Then we have the midi-chlorians.

I never understand why people have such a problem with this. It baffles me. Just because you have something in your blood that helps you talk to the force doesn't mean the force isn't still a mystical energy field created by all living things. Some people are just better tuned in to listening to the will of the force. This is actually incredibly interesting, because Anakin has this legacy of being a Jedi with more midi-chlorians than anyone has ever seen, he grows into this feeling that he deserves to be more powerful and can determine the will of the force better than others. But Qui-Gon also tells him that he needs to learn to quiet his mind to do it. But he never really does. And between his poor training and Palpatine's meddling, he never realizes his potential as a Jedi. It's quite tragic really, and I think the midi-chlorians prop that up nicely.

Again, it wasn’t a big deal and I wish people would get over the midi-chlorians thing.

Then Mr. Plinkett spends about 20 seconds complaining about the ending with no real arguments, so my assumption is that the ending will be the subject of Part Six.

Until next time, try not to take things too seriously in the comment section.

Swank's Rebuttal to the 70 Minute Phantom Menace Review – Part 6

By Bryan Young on May 18, 2010 in Editorial Movies Star Wars

We're coming to a close on the rebuttal of the 7 part Phantom Menace "review" from Red Letter Media, but after this we still have one part left.

For those of you who don't know, I've been asked by a mass of fans of the prequels to rebut the Red Letter Media Review which, though humorous and tongue in cheek, has been a rallying cry for prequel bashers, even though most of the arguments in the video are pretty thin. I've been asked repeatedly to come up with logical responses to it and have been doing so on a semi-regular basis.

Part Six

Part Six deals a lot with the ending, and Plinkett starts right off with saying, "The Jedi go back to Naboo for no reason, and they bring Anakin to a war zone for no reason." I can only assume that Plinkett fell asleep during every single scene that takes place in the Jedi Council chamber, because the reasons they went AND took Anakin were pretty clear.

As far as why they went, they basically have no clue who or what Darth Maul is or what he's after. Qui-Gon's best guess (which was accurate) was that he was out to kill the Queen. With the Queen heading back to Naboo to widen the conflict, Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon are tasked with continuing their protection of her in hopes that they may draw out this mysterious warrior. That's a pretty solid reason and it was in the movie, despite anyone's attempts to tell you otherwise.

As for why they brought Anakin, the council forbade his training. He's essentially an orphan and Qui-Gon has taken it upon himself to take care of the boy. Somehow, I doubt that he could have just left him in a day care.

The next issue is that there doesn't seem to be a blockade on Naboo when the Jedi and the Queen come back, but why would you need to blockade a planet that you've entirely subjugated? It seems ridiculous that the Trade Federation would waste all of those resources maintaining a blockade of a planet they have control of.

The Queen's Plan

Plinkett does a really good job of belittling the Queen's plan without actually thinking things through here. His big problem is that they could have skipped the Gungan battle and the capturing of the Viceroy if they had focused their efforts on destroying the droid control ship. What he fails to mention and realize is that they don't have any ships. They need to draw the droids out of Theed with the Gungan army to sneak the pilots in so they can actually accomplish that task. Then, they need to capture the Viceroy, not so the droids will be lost and confused, but the Trade Federation, and those controlling the droids. It's really clear in the film that if they don't capture the Viceroy and he escapes, he'll be able to return with more droids and the problem will start all over. The plan makes perfect sense and fits the story here, I really don't see how it can be argued with.

There also seems to be an issue with the fact that the Trade Federation (who has zero military experience) would send their army to meet the Gungans, but they say in the film they don't want the battle to take place in or near the city. Nute Gunray is a coward and wants the fighting to take place as far away from himself as possible. And how it will work to Palpatine's advantage is that the Queen and the Jedi can be killed in the name of the conflict and no one would think twice into investigating it.

As far as the problems the reviewer has with Anakin accidentally starting up the ship to help the Queen escape the hangar bay, he doesn't really have an argument against it other than he doesn't like it. I happen to think it's great fun and I like it quite a bit. I think this one is a personal taste issue. And I don't need to get into all the metaphysical force, and midi-chlorians and "Nothing happens by accident" debate.

"If the Sith have been extinct for a millenium, and only Jedi carry lightsabers why are they so good at sword fighting?" Aside from the fact that they're guided by the force? Well, because they train. They have lots and lots of training to do that. I'm sure they spar with their masters. But we never see Luke train to sword fight his either, but no one ever questions why he can do it so well…

Plinket then goes on to complain about how the Jedi can run really fast at the beginning of the film, but can't by the end. And I hate to use a video game analogy here, but have you ever played a Star Wars game with force powers? There's a point where you can get winded and need to lay off the force powers for a minute until you can use them again. Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon are in a heated battle for a long time and Obi-Wan actually just used the force to brace his fall from 5 stories high, and then used the force to leap back up and race back into the battle. Maybe he's winded… But the larger point is that it was visually and dramatically interesting to separate each of the combatants up by the energy shields and it worked for the story, too.

"If the order is to wipe them all out, why are the droids taking prisoners?" I think we can assume based on the context of that conversation that Palpatine meant the royal retinue and the Jedi, not the Gungans.

I can't even believe that the next argument brought up in this video is that the lightsaber battle at the end of Phantom Menace is too good. Here we have well trained and seasoned Jedi and Sith fighting on screen for the first time after only seeing half-machines and boys playing Jedi fight, and the only argument you hear is "it looks too good"? It makes perfect sense why the fighting in this era would be much more graceful and athletic than in any spot in Return of the Jedi.

I can't argue with the fact that there was much more at stake during the lightsaber duels during the classic trilogy than Phantom Menace, but Phantom Menace is a careful building block that shades and enhances those moments later on in the saga. Phantom Menace also provides an excellent contrast in the galaxy, how good and rich things were and how run down and hopeless they had become under the thumb of the Empire. If Phantom Menace hadn't been so bright and relatively cheery, the entire saga would seem monotone, we needed the levity of this film to offset the others and show us what was truly being lost in the Galaxy.

The better the good times, by contrast, the worse the bad. Phantom Menace illustrates this point to a tee in the Star Wars saga, and it's a little disheartening how so few people seem to recognize that.

I’ll be back soon with Part 7, but be sure to come back tomorrow, May 19th, on Prequel Appreciation Day. It’s the 11th anniversary of Phantom Menace and we’ll be giving away a 2gb Obi-Wan Kenobi Mimo-Bot Flash Drive.